

# Tips for Healthcare Providers: Communicating Effectively through Interpreters

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## **Pre-Meeting with the Interpreter**

- Introduce yourself to the Pt. and interpreter
  - Clarify the interpreter's relationship to the patient
- Position the interpreter next to, and slightly behind the patient
- Ask the interpreter to:
  - Repeat *everything* that is said, exactly as it is said
  - Avoid summarization
  - Avoid making judgments, opinions and recommendations
  - Ask clarification questions

## **During the Interview**

- Verbal:
  - Speak directly to the patient
  - Speak slowly, one sentence at a time
  - Check for understanding
  - Ask the patient to “teach back” instructions
  - Avoid slang, metaphors and medical terms
- Non-verbal
  - Use appropriate body language
  - When in doubt, ask if what you're doing is ok
- Maintain control
  - If the interpreter volunteers an opinion or answers for the patient, remind him to interpret only what is said.
  - If a side conversation occurs or you believe information was omitted, ask what was said.

## **After the Interview:**

- Debrief with the interpreter
  - Ask what was helpful and what was challenging

Reference: Cross Cultural Health Care Program. (Video) “Communicating Effectively Through an Interpreter,” (1998). [www.xculture.org](http://www.xculture.org)